

News Release



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RAISE A CUP OF SHADE-GROWN COFFEE AND CELEBRATE THE NINTH ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL MIGRATORY BIRD DAY

International Migratory Bird Day (IMBD) 2001 highlights a fact that's easy to swallow – drinking shade-grown coffee helps protect habitat for migratory birds. Hundreds of IMBD events held on or around the official date of May 12 will celebrate the annual return of millions of birds from wintering habitats in Latin America and emphasize that the continued enjoyment of these birds depends upon our actions as consumers, homeowners, and citizens.

Though it's not widely known, the way coffee is grown can have a direct effect on many of the birds we see in our neighborhoods each spring. Coffee farms or plantations that leave a canopy of shading trees ("shade-grown coffee") benefit migratory birds by providing habitat in their wintering grounds in Mexico, Central and South America, and the Caribbean. The Wilson's warbler, scarlet tanager, northern oriole, indigo bunting, and wood thrush are among the dozens of migratory birds that spend part of their lives in the U.S. and that winter in the coffee-growing regions of Latin America.

"The concept of shade-grown coffee reinforces the central tenet behind International Migratory Bird Day – that each of us can make a difference. What we pour into our cups every morning has an impact on many of the birds we see in our backyard, and on hundreds of other species across the hemisphere," said acting Service Director Marshall Jones. "I invite everyone who cares about birds to make drinking shade-grown coffee a priority, and to find out about other simple, inexpensive ways to benefit birds and their habitat."

Jones noted that homeowners can also make a difference for bird conservation by reducing and carefully monitoring the pesticides they apply to lawns and shrubs, by planting trees and bushes that provide habitat and natural food, by keeping cats indoors whenever possible, and by supporting community land-use decisions that consider the needs of wildlife. By creating or preserving bird-friendly habitat in their backyards and communities, citizens can make their own environment more livable and benefit declining bird species.

Shade-grown coffee was chosen as the theme of the ninth annual IMBD event because of its increasing prominence in conservation, birding, and specialty coffee circles. On shade coffee farms, coffee is grown under existing forest cover or under a canopy of trees planted by the farmer. The canopy provides protection from

storms, contributes to soil quality, and provides habitat for birds. Studies have shown that coffee plantations that are shaded by multiple tree species harbor a variety of birds second only to that found in undisturbed forests.

The desire for higher yields led many Latin American producers in the 1970s to clear forest land and plant dense groves of coffee trees that could grow in full sunlight and were more disease-resistant. Although “sun coffee” farms produce high yields, they require more chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides. They are also more vulnerable to drought and soil erosion, and contribute to toxic runoff and soil acidification. The loss of the shade canopy also proves devastating for the many species of migratory birds that require layers of vegetation for shelter and feeding. Full-sun coffee plantations host a fraction of the bird species found on nearby shade farms.

During the past 30 years, populations of dozens of neotropical migratory birds and other landbirds have declined at rates exceeding 2 percent per year (resulting in a net decline of 50 percent or more), due to habitat loss, pesticide use, and other factors. These losses are not restricted to just one or two groups; warblers, tanagers, sparrows, shorebirds, seabirds, raptors, and wading birds all have been affected. Though no direct link has been shown, loss of shade coffee farms may have contributed to decreases in many of the species that winter in tropical forests.

IMBD is the hallmark event of Partners in Flight, an international coalition created in 1990 that includes the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, other federal and state wildlife agencies, conservation groups, academic institutions, corporations, and private citizens dedicated to reversing these declines in migratory bird populations. In its nine years, IMBD has grown to become the premier celebration of birds and their habitat in our hemisphere.

IMBD celebrations will be held at hundreds of locations, including member facilities of the American Zoo and Aquarium Association, Federal public lands such as National Wildlife Refuges, national parks and forests, city and state parks, bird sanctuaries, and other nature reserves. Many of these events can be found in a registry on the International Migratory Bird Day web site at <http://birds.fws.gov/imbd>. Additional information on migratory bird management issues, including shade-grown coffee, can be found via the Service’s home page at <http://www.fws.gov>.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 94-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System which encompasses more than 535 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 70 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resource offices and 78 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces Federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Aid program that distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

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